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## **INTRODUCTION**

Famous author Mark Twain once wrote, “Golf is a good walk wasted.” Many people feel this way. After all, what’s so fun and interesting about hitting a little white ball with a metal stick trying to get it in a little hole? However, the truth is there is fun to be had on the golf course as is evidenced by the millions of golf enthusiasts all over the world.

Ever since the game of golf was invented back in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, people have been fascinated with mastering this often frustrating game. In 1750, the game of golf evolved into what we know it as today, and since that time, technology and technique has improved on the game, but mastering the game of golf still lies in the individual playing the game.

One of the great things about golf is that it is more than a physical sport. Your mental state can play a huge part in your golf game. If you hit a bad shot, it can really affect your next stroke and so on and so forth. It’s important to realize that if golf were less challenging, it wouldn’t be nearly as much fun.

Just as the golf swing has been improved upon over time, so has the equipment used to play golf. In the 1800’s, golf bags came into use as an easier way to carry around clubs and balls. Golf balls were made lighter and able to travel further and tees were used to help make the ball easier to hit off the tee box.

But even with all this new technology, no one has really perfected the game of golf. If that were the case, there would be scores of 18 with a hole in one on every hole. The truth is that even the professionals can't perfect their golf game. Man is fallible and he makes mistakes. But when it comes to the game of golf, mistakes are inevitable.

I've heard many golfers tell me that they played great but scored horribly. That statement made me really think about my own golf game. I, too, have had rounds where I've hit the ball well but it wasn't reflected in my score. How is it possible that we can hit the ball so well yet still take a 6 on a par 4 hole? The answer isn't easy, but it can be addressed.

I'm not a golf pro, but I do love the game of golf. I've always wanted to improve my golf game, so this book will help both you and me. I decided that researching what the pros have to say would be a great way to put their advice to good use. Compiling all of that information into this book would also be a great way to share that advice.

Let's look at different aspects of the game of golf and find some easy ways to improve our scores!

## **THE BASICS**

The purpose of this book isn't to teach you how to swing a golf club. However, it can never hurt to go over the basics of the golf swing and the golf stance. So often, we get into bad habits on the golf course when it comes to our swings. We forget the things we initially learned about and start swinging the club in really the wrong way.

Everyone has their own golf swing style. Very few people stand the same way, have the same backswing, and hit the ball the same way. For that matter, very few people are able to duplicate a swing exactly the same every single time. But there are some basics to a good golf swing that everyone should keep in mind.

The full golf swing is an unnatural, highly complex motion and notoriously difficult to learn. It is not uncommon for beginners to spend several months practicing the very basics before playing their first ball on a course. It is usually very difficult to acquire a stable and successful swing without professional instruction and even highly skilled golfers may continue to take golf lessons for many years.

So let's just go over the basics of the golf swing first – just as a review.

## **The Grip**

There are three basic golf grips that you can use: the overlapping grip, the baseball grip, and the interlocking grip. We'll cover each of those in a minute. Here's the basic rule for gripping a golf club.

Start by holding the club directly in front of you with your right hand with the club head pointing away from you at about a 45 degree angle.

Next grip the club with your left hand. The club will be mainly in the palm across the pads at the base of the fingers. However, the club will lie across the first section of the index finger. The thumb will be positioned straight on top of the golf club shaft. Relative to the golf club, the thumb will be in the twelve o'clock position.

Now, with your right hand, grip the golf club just above your left hand with the fingers, not the palm, of your right hand. The thumb will be positioned slightly off to the left. Relative to the golf club, the thumb will be in an eleven o'clock position.

If you have gripped the golf club correctly, only the first two knuckles of your left hand will be visible. Also, your left thumb should be completely hidden under your right hand. The index finger position of your right hand will look and feel like a gun trigger finger.

Here are three of the most common golf grips and how to use them:

- The overlapping grip is the most common golf grip used. It is used mostly by male golfers and those with strong wrists and forearms. The little finger of the right hand lies on top of or overlaps the index finger on the left hand.
- The baseball grip is most commonly used by younger golfers, females, seniors, and those with weaker wrists and arms. The index finger of the left hand and the little finger of the right hand meet but do not overlap or interlock.
- An interlocking grip will be used by golfers with shorter hands and fingers, those with thicker or chunkier palms, and golfers who have difficulty with the overlapping grip. The index finger of the left hand and the little finger of the right hand overlap each other and interlock.

If your golf grip pressure is right, the club could almost be pulled out of your hands, but not quite. A correct golf grip will make you feel as if you are holding the club mostly in the palm and last three fingers of your left hand. Regardless, both hands should hold the club with equal pressure. A correct golf grip doesn't guarantee a successful golf swing; however, a defective golf grip will almost always result in a failed golf swing.

## **Your Stance**

If you start with a bad golf stance, you'll probably follow with a bad golf back swing, a bad downswing, and a bad follow through. Not to worry though.

It's just not that difficult! Your golf stance may not be perfect, but you can compensate by staying balanced and relaxed. Your weight should be equally distributed over your left and right leg. If you can pick either of your feet off the ground, you're not balanced.

Start by placing the inside of your front foot just ahead of the ball. Since you're going to be using a driver or 3 wood, the front and back feet should be shoulder width or slightly more than shoulder width apart.

Next, bend at the top of the legs (keep your back straight) and then bend slightly at the knees. The kneecaps will be directly above the balls of your feet. The angle of your back to the ground will be approximately 45 degrees. Your arms should be hanging straight down from your shoulders.

Good posture counts. Keep your back straight but don't tense up. You might think of it as pushing your back pockets higher.

Your weight should be on the balls of your feet, not on the toes or heels. Likewise, your weight should be equally distributed between your front and back foot. Now you should be more comfortable and less tense. If you're out of balance, you're falling down. That's no way to start a good golf swing.

A line drawn across the front of your feet should point to your target. You may want to check this by first placing your club up against the toes of your feet and then step back and see if the club is really pointing to your target. This is your target line and your knees, hips, and shoulders should also be parallel to this line.

One slight adjustment will be the position of your shoulders. When you assume the proper golf stance and grip, your club and left arm will form a straight line between your shoulder and the ball. For this to happen, your right shoulder will be slightly lower to the ground than the left, but a line through your shoulders should still be parallel to the target line.

Once you grip the club and take your stance at the ball, find a way to relax and loosen up before you start your swing. You may want to waggle just a little bit and to ignore those who might laugh at you. Once you hit that monster shot, they'll stop. Now you're ready to swing.

## **The Backswing**

Essentially, the backswing is a rotation to the right, consisting of a shifting of the player's body weight to the right side, a turning of the pelvis and shoulders, lifting of the arms and flexing of the elbows and wrists. At the end of the backswing the hands are above the right shoulder, with the club pointing more or less in the intended direction of ball flight.

The downswing is roughly a backswing reversed. After the ball is hit, the follow-through stage consists of a continued rotation to the left. At the end of the swing, the weight has shifted almost entirely to the left foot, the body is fully turned to the left and the hands are above the left shoulder with the club hanging down over the players' back.

Instead of thinking about your arms and swinging your club backwards, try to think of your back swing as turning your back to the target. You're not swinging the club up in the air; instead you're just putting the club behind your back. It's like winding a spring!

The back swing works from the top down. The back swing takeaway starts at the top with your arms and shoulder turning, and it works its way down to your hips and legs.

The back swing is all about coiling up your body and creating the muscle tension or torque needed to release a powerful downswing. More specifically, resistance is created between the greater turning of the upper body and shoulders and the lesser turning of the hips and lower body.

Don't get in a hurry! A hurried back swing doesn't make the downswing any faster. In fact, it may be just the opposite. You've got to remember that somewhere at the top of that back swing, you've got to change and go the exact opposite direction.

The speed of your back swing should be at a steady tempo, not real fast or real slow. The tendency is to go too fast. Any time your golf swing begins to break down; your first correction should usually be to slow down my back swing.

Turn your back toward the target or, maybe better, think of turning your chest away from the target. Pick the thought that produces the greater feeling of coiling or resistance. Don't allow the back knee to fly outwards. Keep your weight towards the inside of that foot.

Your wrists should be completely cocked by the time your left arm is parallel to the ground. The golf club shaft should be at a 90 degree angle to your left arm.

Don't focus on the club head during the backswing. Instead think of the arm as being hinged at the left shoulder. Then, like a gate that swings open from its hinges, the left arm hinges at the left shoulder and swings across the body until it approaches the right side at my right armpit. The left arm remains relatively straight, but could bend slightly.

Your shoulder and upper body turn begin as the left arm reaches this position. As the arms go back, two things should happen:

1. The forearms will naturally rotate clockwise slightly until the golf club head points to the sky. Opening the club face more won't seem right to you if you tend to slice, but don't resist this very natural movement.
2. As your arms travel up and back and the golf club shaft approaches parallel to the ground, you will gradually begin cocking your wrists. Then by the time that your left arm is parallel to the ground, your wrists should be completely cocked at a 90 degree angle.

Cocking your wrists is a very important part of creating club head speed. This is often a big swing problem. You can get so concerned about “taking the club straight back” at the beginning of your back swing that you don’t completely cock your wrists. Fixing this problem can straighten out several golf swing problems.

The next part of the golf swing is the shoulder and upper body turn. The left arm has swung across the body near the right armpit. The natural continuation of this motion is to begin the turning of the shoulders. The shoulders will turn from parallel to the target line to approximately perpendicular to the target line depending on your own flexibility. As this happens, the hips and then legs will also become involved in the turn.

Wouldn’t you like to feel more body torque build up in your golf back swing? Of course! A friend gave me this golf swing tip just the other day. Maybe you’ll find it to be as helpful as I did.

Instead of trying to create body torque by turning your shoulders, think of turning your lower chest (Let’s say about six inches above your bellybutton) away from the target. Of course when you do it this way your shoulders will still turn but you should feel much more torque building through your body.

Don’t let the knee of your back leg turn or fly out or to the back as the back swing progresses. You’ll lose part of your body torque.

At the height of the back swing, you’ll feel like your back is over top of your back leg. At this point your weight has shifted back over your back leg.

It is truly a myth that the head stays over the ball as at address and the body turns on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the backbone. In reality, the body turns on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the back leg. Keep in mind that the head is moving slightly backwards. The head should stay fairly level and not bob up and down.

Where are the arms and club at the end of the back swing? Should the golf club be parallel to the ground? Honestly, you shouldn't really don't give that much thought. As long as you don't bend the left arm more than slightly, these positions will be determined by how far you can turn your upper body.

If you keep your back knee in, the back foot will feel your body weight on the inside as the shoulders turn. Towards the end of the golf back swing, some golfers make the mistake of letting the heel of their front foot leave the ground. If the back swing coils the spring, the feet must stay anchored to the ground to give the body something to coil against. Better to let the front foot roll or sort of lay down on the inside of the foot without dragging.

If you start with a correct golf stance, grip, and back swing, the best advice for your down swing for the most part is to just let it happen!

The down swing and follow through should be the very natural result of everything that precedes it. You may want to use the "No Arms Drill" in the next section to memorize the feel of the golf swing which leads to a more comfortable, automatic golf swing.

If you're at the correct position at the top of your back swing, your body will start to unwind releasing the golf club which will strike the golf ball and lead to a balanced follow through.

Think of the follow-through as your victory salute to a successful golf swing! Your front leg will be fairly straight and your hips will be forward forming a straight line with your front leg.

Your head may feel like its back a bit and your back leg will be forward of the back foot which has rolled to the inside, front of the foot. Most all of your weight will be on your front foot, completing your weight shift from the back side to the front side.

This is like a barometer of your entire swing. When your golf swing is balanced and smooth, you end with that nice reverse C position at the end.

On the other hand, you could end your golf swing off balance and catching yourself from falling down. Then it's time to go back to the beginning of your golf swing and find where you lost that balance.

You should have only one swing thought during your golf down swing. That's because you really don't have time for two. Consequently, your only thought should be to turn your belt buckle (or bellybutton) towards the target as fast as you possibly can.

This movement should begin about a third or half way through the golf down swing. It will end, of course, when you are pointed towards the target at which point you will have already hit the golf ball and you're into the follow through. And you should also be seeing the golf ball traveling straight down the fairway!

On the golf down swing your body will move forward and turn on an axis formed by a line traveling through the head and the front leg. Keep in mind that the head will be moving forward from its position at the end of your golf back swing; however, the head should stay fairly level and not bob up and down.

Since the golf down swing starts from the bottom and works its way up, then the feet are the place to start. Let's see, at the end of the back swing, the front foot was rolling (almost laying down) on the inside of that foot.

Consequently, a good trigger motion would start by moving the left side towards the target and placing that foot back to being flat on the ground.

To trigger this move, you should plant your front foot by moving the front knee towards the target. Your lower body will slide towards the target.

Since both knees are still slightly bent and flexed, this move will give you sort of a squatty look and feel. You might feel as if you're dropping down slightly. Planting that front foot begins the chain reaction of your body uncoiling and your weight will shift back to the left (front) side.

What you do not want to do is start the down swing with your arms and shoulders. This move will cause your wrists to un-cock too soon (called casting) resulting in some pretty nasty results (topped shots, slices).

The most effective golf swing tip I've found to prevent casting is also a very logical one. Begin your down swing before you finish your back swing. Makes sense! You're not likely to start your down swing with your arms and upper body if they're still winding up.

So, as you feel your upper body approaching the end of the back swing you will move your front knee towards the target. As you do this, you'll feel that low, squatty position and know that you're starting your back swing properly with the lower body.

Often the golf swing feels uncomfortable and awkward, so you may want to try the following drill until you start feeling better about the golf swing.

### **No Arms Drill**

Remember, I said you should probably be spending less time thinking about what your arms are doing and where they're going? Once my wrists are cocked, I really don't think much about my arms.

This golf swing drill, simply put, is just practicing your golf swing without using a golf club. Consequently, you'll be able to concentrate on the feeling of your muscles coiling up and releasing without being confused or distracted by the movement of your arms.

This is also a good opportunity to practice keeping your feet on the ground. Practice having your front foot roll inward on the golf back swing and memorize that feeling. Another upside to this drill is that you can practice it anywhere or anytime.

Begin by getting into your regular golf stance. You can place a ball down in front of you or imagine where it would be if that helps. Now instead of holding a golf club, cross your arms in front of you to where your left hand is at your right shoulder and your right hand is at your left shoulder.

Try not to do this drill fast or slow, but at a steady tempo. Do this drill frequently and memorize the movements and how they feel so you can do them without think when you're on the golf course.

Again, the golf back swing starts at the top (your shoulders and arms) and works its way down to your hips and legs. Remember, your head will move to the back but should not bob up or down. It should stay level.

Of course, in this drill you don't use your arms, so you begin by turning your shoulders. I find it more beneficial to think of turning your midsection (Let's say about six inches above your bellybutton.) away from the target. Of course when you do it this way your shoulders will also turn. Get comfortable as you are feeling the torque building through your body.

As your shoulders and hips turn, remember to not let your right (back) knee turn outwards (towards the back). This will have the feeling of pushing that knee inwards and/or keeping your body weight more on the inside of the back foot.

Feel the front knee turn inwards and the front foot rolls towards the inside but still stay on the ground.

Start from the bottom. This golf swing drill is a good time to practice moving your front knee towards the target as a trigger to your down swing. Don't forget to start that move before the back swing is complete. Get comfortable with that low, squatty feeling.

Turn your hips with the swing thought of turning your belt buckle to the target. You will feel like your hips are leading the rest of your body. The shoulders will follow as you pivot on your front leg.

Use this drill to commit to memory, or muscle memory, any movement that isn't a swing thought.

In a slight variation of this drill, you could start the golf back swing with your arms (no club). Practice hinging your arms at the shoulder and cocking your wrists as your arms cross your chest near the back arm pit triggering your shoulder turn.

And that's the basics of the golf swing. You won't get any better unless you practice, but if you have good solid mechanics in your golf swing, you have the beginning to a great game!

We've already said that golf is much more than just a physical game. It's a mental game as well. You have to keep a positive mindset when on the golf course, so getting your mind in the right place is very important.

## **DRIVING THE BALL**

While driving the golf ball might seem like a simple process, it really isn't. Some seasoned golfers just look at driving the ball as a simple process. "Grip it and rip it" is a common phrase you can hear on many tee boxes. However, there are some things you can do to get more distance on your drives.

First and foremost, you need to be relaxed when you begin addressing the ball. You must be loose before pulling back the club. Do not tighten up over the golf ball. It is important to waggle the club back and forth a few times in order to create some flow to start the golf swing. This action will promote proper rhythm and tempo.

Teeing the ball higher will aid in hitting the ball farther. By teeing the ball higher, it will help achieve better launch angle and reduce backspin at impact. This will allow the ball to be hit on the up-swing - producing more carry and distance.

One of the most valuable pieces of advice this recreational golfer ever received was to look at the back of the ball. It's easy to take your gaze off of that little white orb, but if you are not looking at the ball before you hit it, you will be more likely to miss it.

You will want to have a wider stance in order to gain more stability in your backswing. Approximately sixty percent of your body weight on the left side to gain a more powerful coil. If you're right handed, point your left toe more inline to the target. You'll need to swing harder and put more of your right hand into hitting the ball, and take advantage of all of the elements – especially the wind, if there is any.

When you're at the top of your backswing, be sure to turn your shoulders a full 90 degrees. Your back should actually be facing the target. Look at John Daly when he drives the golf ball. He has a massive shoulder turn. Many players ask him all the time how he does it. He says it's due to having a sound technique and a wide swing arc. He always has a rhythm to his golf swing and is never out of sync on his swing.

After you reach the top of your backswing, you're ready to begin the downswing. Do not rush your downswing. If you do, you'll have an increased chance of swinging straight down on the ball and eliminating any power you had going. You will also most likely chili dip and miss hit the golf ball. Look at Fred Couples and his downswing. It's nearly flawless.

Make sure to keep your left arm straight during your transition. When you keep your arm straight it enables the club head to remain square and hit the ball properly. Don't have a herky-jerky swing. Keep your golf swing smooth. Picture yourself hitting through the ball, not just to it. Hit hard with your right hand.

Be sure to take advantage of the playing elements to help give you more distance; especially using the wind to your advantage. When you have the wind at your back, you should tee the golf ball higher than normal. This gives you a higher ball flight with more carry in the air. That means greater distance. When you're playing into the wind you want the opposite. Tee the ball down a little more than usual.

As mentioned before, you will want to look at the ball before hitting it. Some players find this difficult as it makes them lose focus as they concentrate too much on the ball. An easy answer to this problem is to turn your chin to the right and point it about two or three inches behind the ball. Keep it there until impact and then watch the ball sail through the air.

Believe it or not, the pressure you use to grip the club is important in driving the ball longer. Even though you may think that gripping harder and swinging harder produces results that is absolutely incorrect and is probably why you don't get consistent distance.

The great players indicated that the grip pressure should resemble one holding a bird without crushing it but also not letting it go. The tighter you hold the club, the less it will release through the ball creating severe pulls and big ballooning slices. Swinging hard is ok but the hands must be tension free.

Your driving wood should stay along the ground for at least the first 20 to 25 percent of your swing. If your club is lifting up, you will pop the ball up and not get that long boring drive that you see the pros hit regularly when the ball takes off like a missile and slowly climbs to a beautiful height and tracks down the fairway.

Keep the angle on your leading hand. Many amateurs tend to flip the hands forward in an effort to get the ball in the air, but this only retards the effort of having good equipment.

The leading hand (left hand for most players, right hand southpaws) should be angled down towards the ball on the downswing.

It's like you are hitting the ball with the back of left hand. If your left hand is flipping up on the downswing, your contact will not be solid and you will get consistent misses with your wood. This tip also starts the ball low and lets it climb on its own through your generated power.

Finish towards the target. Pick a spot on the ground that lines up with your target and from your address stretch your wood towards it. If done correctly, your arms should form a V shape with both arms fully extended. Finish the swing over your left shoulder.

Do you have a tendency to bend your left arm early? That also will retard distance; keep your V as long as possible before it bends at the finish of your swing and you will find yourself getting much more distance.

Speed can be increased by setting the wrists into a cocked position early, and on the downswing keeping the wrists cocked for as late as possible, and then swishing through the ball. This is similar to flicking your wrists when using a badminton, squash, or tennis racket.

Golfers who are inclined to hit at the ball with their hands rather than swinging through the ball find that they lose a lot of power, and hence distance. Your power comes from your body, not from your hands. If you want to drive the ball further, don't hit the ball with your hands – let the club do the work it was designed to do.

Of course, you will want to choose the right club for the distance of the hole. Obviously, you will want to choose a driver for the longer holes to get maximum distance, but for shorter holes like Par 3s, you will likely want to choose a smaller club like an iron. You will want to try and get as close to the hole as possible, but you also don't want to overshoot the green either.

The best way to know how far you can hit specific clubs is to get on the driving range. Because golf isn't an exact science, there are a lot of variables that come into play with the golf swing.

But if you practice a lot, your chances of hitting the ball consistently are much higher. Plus, you will know which club is your hundred yard club and which one is your 50 yard club.

After you have driven the ball, you'll (hopefully) be in the fairway.

## **FAIRWAY SHOTS**

Once you have driven off the tee box, you will probably be faced with a second shot, hopefully from the fairway. Of course, we hope that you've been able to make it to the green, but on longer par 5 holes, that's just not realistic for most golfers.

The lie of the ball in a fairway shot will dictate how you hit your next shot. In some friendly games, your opponents may allow you to put the ball up on some grass. This will emulate, in a way, a tee since you cannot use a tee with a fairway shot. In tournaments or serious money games, you will probably have to play the ball as it lies, so it's a good idea to know how to hit an effective fairway shot.

Many inexperienced golfers are intimidated by the fairway shot. They will often baby their swing and not hit the ball fully. This is a huge mistake. Golf clubs are designed to work with a full golf swing and do a specific job, so choose a club that matches your distance from the hole and then take a full swing. Don't be afraid that you'll overshoot the hole. If you've picked the right club, you'll get to the green.

Aim your left shoulder (the right one if you're a southpaw) at your target – the flag. Your hands should be in front of the ball at impact. Keep the same swing motions as if you are driving the ball. To help square your clubface, try to touch your left forearm with your right forearm at impact.

If you are in deep grass, the main idea is to get the ball up in the air. That means you will want a club that has a lot of loft. That means an 8 or 9 iron ideally. However, remember that you will most likely not get a lot of distance with these smaller clubs.

When you swing, be sure and follow through after impact. The laws of physics dictate that when you strike the ball, it will be carried through and into the air as your arms bring the club back up.

Your technique on deep grass shots should be geared toward minimizing the intervention of the grass. In other words, you want to hit the ball as cleanly as possible. To do that, you need to move the ball back in your stance.

If, for instance, on a 5-iron shot from the fairway you position the ball off your left heel, move it back to a spot an inch to the right of your heel for a shot from the rough. This ball position should leave your hands slightly ahead of the clubface at address. From that setup you'll tend to swing the club up a bit more vertically on the backswing and return it a bit more steeply to the ball. With this steeper attack the clubface will come down on the ball rather than brush through the grass.

For really deep grass, again, the idea is to minimize the presence of the grass and how it will affect your shot. Once again, play the ball back in your stance, but this time, play it two inches back instead of one, because you're going to have to go down after the ball.

To further increase the steepness of the swing, open your stance a few degrees so that your feet, knees, hips and shoulders align to the left. Your club head should align square to the target line. It's the same basic alignment as for a slice, but when playing a short iron from the rough 1 you won't have to worry about any sideward spin.

Since the grass will grab at your club and close the face: at impact, you'll want an extra-firm grip in your left hand. Alternatively, you can aim the clubface a bit right of your target at address, thereby allowing the grass to turn the face into a square position at impact.

The swing should be an aggressive, forceful one. If you get a kick out of swinging hard, this is the place to enjoy yourself. It's a powerful, steep chop that must go down and through the thick stuff. Be sure to keep the club accelerating through impact; otherwise you'll risk moving the ball only a few feet. The faster you can get the club moving through the ball, the faster that ball will climb out of its nest and the farther it will go.

Eventually, you'll be close enough to chip.

## **COURSE MANAGEMENT**

What exactly is course management? Essentially, it means adapting your game to the specific nuances of the course and playing the course in the best way you can to achieve a good score.

When does course management start? Some players will tell you it starts after they have to make a decision on the course. Nothing could be further from the truth. Course management starts before you tee off on the first hole. You should always have a plan for the round you are playing and more importantly you should always have a plan and a target for each and every shot.

One particular area that most golfers should concentrate on is hitting the ball from 125-150 yards out to the green. By improving your game in this area you'll give yourself many more chances for birdie and par putts.

The key to this aspect of your game is being able to "know" that you can hit the ball onto any green from 150 yards out. You want to get to the point where you can consistently knock on 8 or 9 iron onto the green every time!

It may sound difficult if you're a higher handicap golfer, but it's really not. 125 -150 yards is very manageable, and most greens are large in size. In addition, hitting 8 and 9 irons are much easier to control than your longer irons.

If you have a tough time swinging these clubs then this is an area where you need to spend some quality practice time on. Once you do get this down, the only part left is distance management.

That's the first key. The next point is working your game around the 150 yard shot.

If you're on a 550 yard par 5, you know if you hit a decent drive and even if you hit your second shot poorly, leaving you with 135 yards to the green, you know you can now get it on the green with your third shot.

So, even though you didn't hit a great second shot, because you have the 150 yard shot in your bag you're still putting for birdie. This is what good course management is all about.

It's amazing what focusing on this part of your game can do for you. You'll see your golf game differently. Now you'll know that no matter what kind of trouble you get into off the tee box, all you need to do is get your ball 135-150 yards out and you'll be fine.

Practice until you can master this shot. Then build your golf game with that thought in place. By doing so, you won't be worrying as much on how to hit bunker shots, chips shots and other tough greenside shots.

Instead of being completely frustrated, you'll find yourself having more fun.

Once you have this shot in your bag, then you can focus on putting, driving, or hitting your long irons. Until then, put all your efforts into mastering the 125-150 yard shot. If you will take this advice I can honestly tell you that you will dramatically lower your golf scores.

You have to know what your strengths and weaknesses are on the golf course. This is essential to the principles of course management. You must know how far you can hit the ball with specific clubs in order to navigate the course in as few shots as possible.

When you are managing the course, you are taking into account the problems and strengths of your game and applying them to the way the course is laid out. Let's look at two examples:

1. You are on a par 5 hole with light rough on the left side of the fairway and a lateral water hazard up the right. You're pretty confident you can hit the green in regulation, but you have a propensity for hitting a "banana ball" or a hard slice. How should you hit this shot taking into consideration the way you play?

2. Most players would just hit it up the middle trying to hit the ball straight hoping to keep the water out of play. However, that water hazard is the hole's strength and your slice is your weakness. It's foolish to pit the two against each other because you will probably be the loser.

Aim your teen shot to land in the rough on the left side of the fairway. In this case, your normal slice will result in a second shot from the fairway while a straight ball will result in a second shot from the rough. However, you will probably still be able to reach the green in regulation from the rough.

Most fairways are at least 40 yards wide. If you aim 10 yards to the left of the fairway, it would take a 50 yard slice to get the ball to the water. A shot with that much curve is rare, so this is definitely the best way to play this hole.

3. You are 150 yards from the green with the pin placed at the front of the green, but the pin is tucked behind a menacing sand trap. You've spent a lot of time practicing getting out of the sand and on the green in one shot, but you're not confident enough in your ability to do it just yet. Your 150-yard club is an 8 iron. What do you do to try and avoid landing in the bunker?

Most golfers would automatically reach for their 8 iron, and “take dead aim”.

However if you were to play with sound course strategy, you would take a 7 iron and aim for the middle back of the green leaving a straight forward two putt for par.

Most people would be afraid of going over the green, but you know that your 7 iron goes a maximum of 165 yards. Even if you hit your best shot you will still have a 45 foot putt for birdie. You also know that if you miss hit the 7 iron it will wind up pin high and in almost no circumstance will the dreaded bunker be in play.

On the other hand if you choose the 8 iron, it will require a near perfect strike to get the ball to the flag. The slightest miss hit results in your ball landing in the sand trap. Here, the 7-iron is the right club based on the layout of the hole.

Putting course management into play with your golf game requires a good working knowledge of the way you play and what you are capable of doing. That means you need to track your progress and really pay attention to how your game is coming along.

Course management skills can really help shave strokes off of your score. So can knowing what the most common mistakes and problems golfers have along with ways to combat them.

## COMMON PROBLEMS WITH A SWING

As we've said numerous times, golf is not an exact science. Many golfers have worked for years and years trying to perfect their swing and improve their game. However, problems do arise. They come about mostly because golfers tend to forget the basic mechanics of the game and start playing sloppy.

In this section, we'll address some of the more common problems golfers have along with mistakes they make. We'll also offer up some suggestions to help you combat these problems and get on the road toward [playing better golf](#).

### **The Slice**

A slice is a specific left-to-right trajectory shape for a golf ball created by a significant tilt of the spin-axis of the golf ball to the right, or a clockwise spin. This is opposite for lefties. A slice usually ends up right of the target line, and the term is often used when the curve in the trajectory is extreme and unintentional. The less extreme version of a slice is called a "fade".

In understanding the basics of the golf swing, in order to hit the ball squarely and straight every time, you must return to the original spot at impact. A slice is caused by the club face being slightly open at the point of impact, thus causing the ball to spin in a clockwise motion, (opposite for lefties).

In most cases the swing path is correct, but the golf ball is not being hit squarely at the point of impact, commonly caused by what is known as a "weak grip".

A second factor that causes a golf slice may be swing speed and shaft stiffness. If you use a stiff shaft driver try a regular flex or mid flex shaft and that may correct your problem.

The simplest fix for a slice is in the grip. By having a "weak grip", a grip that is turned more counter-clockwise, (opposite for lefties), can cause the club face to open at the time of impact.

You should start by turning your grip slightly to the right, (left for lefties), thus giving you a "stronger grip", not holding the club more tightly. Remember the basics and only hold the club tight enough to keep control. You should not have any tension on your wrist and forearms.

You may want to try increasing your swing speed by pulling the club farther back before swinging to fix your golf slice. When you increase your swing speed you can gain yardage and will hit the fairways more often.

Make sure not to bend over too far or round house your swing similar to a baseball swing. Bring your club back straight and follow through on the swing.

Point the label on the ball in the direction you want it to go when teeing it up. This way you can concentrate on the ball without looking up.

Then, when you tee up your ball, follow this checklist faithfully:

- Stand Straighter
- Bend Knees Slightly
- Keep Feet Shoulder Width
- Line Up Ball with Front Foot
- Tip the Club Face in Just a Bit
- Loosen Your Grip
- Keep Your Eye on the Ball
- Clear Your Mind
- Now Hit the Fairway

### **Draw/Fade**

The less extreme version of a Hook is called a "Draw", and the less extreme version of a slice is called a "Fade". Many golfers find that they are only having a draw or fade with their longer clubs, and they are very accurate with their shorter clubs.

Both the draw and the fade are both products of a stronger swing and can be normal. Many golfers use the fade and the draw to their advantage. Slight modifications to your swing will correct both problems, but be careful; tampering with perfection could lead to disaster.

If you are consistent with the fade or the draw, my advice would be to continue to play either shot, just slightly change your aim. If you are inconsistent in your shots and you sometimes fade, draw, slice or hook, look into getting back to the basics and modify your swing to correct your inconsistencies.

## **Hook**

A hook is a specific right-to-left trajectory shape for a golf ball created by a significant tilt of the spin-axis of the golf ball to the left, or a counter-clockwise spin. This is opposite for lefties. A hook usually ends up to the left of the target line, and the term is often used when the curve in the trajectory is extreme and unintentional. The less extreme version of a hook is called a "draw".

In understanding the basics of the golf swing, in order to hit the ball squarely and straight every time, you must return to the original spot at impact. A hook is caused by the club face being slightly closed at the point of impact, thus causing the ball to spin in a counter-clockwise motion, (opposite for lefties).

In most cases the swing path is correct, but the golf ball is not being hit squarely at the point of impact, commonly caused by what is known as a "strong grip".

As in the slice, the hook is often a product of an improper grip. Start by looking at your current grip. Remembering the basics of the golf grip, you should only see 2 knuckles of your left hand. If you see 3 knuckles, then you have a "strong grip" and this maybe the cause of your golf hook.

You can fix your hook by trying to change your grip to a "weak grip". Turn your hands slightly counter-clockwise on your grip, (opposite for lefties), thus weakening the grip. Grip pressure is also a key element in the release process. If the pressure is too loose at impact then the tendency will for the club to release too early causing the ball to hook.

Remember the basics and only hold the club tight enough to keep control. You should not have any tension on your wrist and forearms. Practice the grip and check your results. Changing your grip should be slight, over compensating can cause other problems with your swing or begin to cause you to slice.

Most golf hooks are from a "strong grip", but in order for you to correct your hook properly; you must have the know-how and learn the basics of the golf swing.

## **Push**

A push is a ball that goes directly to the right because of the action of the club. This should not be mistaken for a slice. A slice is an action of the ball spinning clockwise. A slice normally begins to the target and arcs away to the right, (left for lefties). A push is an action of the swing and is normally in an in-to-out swing motion. The opposite of the push is the pull, which is an out-to-in swing motion.

The push is caused by the swing path of the club. In the down swing, the path of the club will travel in an in-to-out path. Normally this is caused by throwing your arms ahead of your shoulders, being too close to the ball, and trying to over compensate your swing to make contact with the ball, or having your hips ahead of the impact area. These are the easiest to identify, but there could be other reasons.

The easiest way to fix a push is to go back to the basics of the golf swing. The push is directly related to the action of the golf swing. Throwing your arms ahead of your shoulders, make sure that during your back swing, you push your arms out with your shoulders, and on the down swing, you pull your arms down with your shoulders.

At the point of impact you should be back to the same point as you were at your stance. Standing too close to the ball, check out your stance. The club face should be positioned center of the ball and the butt end of the club should be about 4-5 inches from the inside of the left thigh and in line with it.

Having your hips ahead of the impact area, again, you should remember to be exactly the same at the point of impact as you were at your stance. The push comes from an improper club swing and knowing the basics.

## **Shank**

The shank is a missed hit ball off the club face. Other ways that a ball can be missed hit include topping, whiffing, blading, dubbed, or fat shot. All of these miss hits are the product of only a few things;

- Not keeping your head down through your swing.
- Standing too close or too far from the ball.
- Improper Club Grip.
- Improper Swing Dynamics.

A shank is something that nobody wants to have happen to them. A shank is normally a product of not concentrating. Slow down, remember the basics, keep your head down, and concentrate on the shot at hand. The shank is one of the easiest fixable problems in golf.

Remember your training and get back to the basics. By getting back to the basics of golf, and learning the correct grip or proper stance, and using the proper swing technique will help in eliminating all of the problems with miss hitting the ball.

Those are the most common problems golfers find with their swing. There are also some very common mistakes that golfers make.

## **COMMON MISTAKES**

It's difficult sometimes to hit a good golf shot. Some of us hack away at a ball hoping that we can get off a good shot and be proud at least for a few moments. But if we know what the most common mistakes are in the golf game, we can take steps to correct those mistakes and extend that pride throughout our game.

### **The Exaggerated Twist**

Most people believe that the more they turn their backswing, the more distance they will gain. This is simply not true. Actually, to gain distance, you need to find the perfect posture and perform a fluid swing that will insure solid contact with the ball. If you exaggerate the twist, you will go out of the ideal swing plane and have to over-compensate to even make contact. Plus, the chances of coming out with a slice, a hook, or even topping the ball are much greater.

### **Rolling Hands**

This is a common mistake and one that feels OK as you are doing it. As the backswing progresses the club gets too far inside and behind you and the clubface is open, facing the sky. To finish the backswing you will lift the arms and put the club in a steep and weak position, maybe even getting it across the line.

If this is your mistake, you need to monitor how much the left wrist rotates early in the swing. Take the club back to waist high and allow only 90 degrees of rotation, so the back of your left wrist is parallel to your body line and the shaft is in line with your toes. The toe of the club should be almost vertical.

### **Disconnecting Arms**

Many players begin the swing by pushing the hands out toward the ball and moving the left arm away from the body. As the handle moves out the club head moves inward, getting it inside and behind. The rest of the backswing is similar to the previous move.

The fix here is to keep your left arm connected to your left chest and moving across as the swing progresses. Visualize your hands tracking back with your body rotation, rather than moving out.

### **Picking the Club Up**

If all you use to begin the takeaway are hands and arms, you will surely pick it up and chop it back down. The golf swing is a synchronized blend of club, hands, arms, and body movements, and they need to start together. If you are a picker, make sure the core begins to rotate as the club is put in motion by your hands and arms.

### **Club Head Starts Outside**

The opposite of rolling the hands, this is often the result of trying for maximum extension or an overdone one-piece takeaway. Once your club is outside and above the plane, it must loop back under to get back on plane.

Lee Trevino perfected this move, and Jim Furyk is pretty good at it as well. But it is not something the average player can do consistently. Eliminate the exaggeration and work the club head back and up your plane line.

### **Standing Upright**

Too many golfers stand too upright at address. Instead, their spine should be bent forward from the hip sockets until their arms hang freely. Players should also tilt their spine from 3-to-9 degrees on their trailside. This defines the starting move and helps you reach the 90-degree rotation needed for your upper trunk at the top of your backswing.

Two things derive from this trailside tilt: 1. it lowers your trail hand so that you can easily grip the club without stretching your trail arm or shortening your target arm. That way, you will not be inclined to move your trail shoulder, so that it points out towards your target; 2. It also puts your torso in a proper position to begin your swing.

## **A Bad Stance**

The position you want to achieve at address is the well-known "railroad track" in which your feet, hips and shoulders form a line parallel to the target. That parallel line must be directed to the side of your actual target.

Most golfers do not achieve this setup and otherwise find themselves in poor address positions. That is because they step into the ball with their eyes on their feet or on the ball and the club. The end result is they mistakenly step toward the target, which forces them into a closed position at address.

Imagine when looking down the line of flight while stepping into your address position that your focus is keyed on a large tree left of the target. Now, draw an imaginary line from that tree back to your feet/hips/shoulders, so that they are parallel to your target line.

When hitting a short iron, align your feet/hips/shoulders directly to the tree. With middle irons, the alignment is a little to the side of the tree. For a driver, the alignment is farther to the side to allow for the optical illusion that makes your target appear smaller.

Here are some things to keep in mind when addressing the ball:

- Widen your stance when using a driver, so that the width measured from the center of your feet is equal to the outside of your shoulders. The width becomes proportionately less and less as the club gets shorter. That way, your ankles are under your shoulder joints.
- Close your stance a little, with your trail foot pulled back a little more from the target line than your target foot. This is important, especially if you lack flexibility. You can do this with all clubs, even your wedge. It makes the rotation of the upper trunk to 90 degrees that much easier.
- The base of your sternum (center of your chest) should be pointing directly at the ball, so that your trail arm moves most effectively and stays below the target arm at the start of the swing and until it folds.
- Golf is a stability sport. Distribute your weight from the balls of your feet to your heels, but not to your toes.
- Golfers tend to stand with knees that are too straight. Be sure there is some flex in your knees, so you can use your joints properly. In essence, sit back with your hips out behind you in a skeletally balanced position.

### **Skulling or Topping the Ball**

When you skull the ball, your club is coming over the top of it and you will end up hitting it “fat”. It won’t go very far, if at all, and you’re likely to be a little embarrassed at your mistake. Don’t worry; a lot of inexperienced golfers top the ball. There is a fix for it as well.

Put your weight in the middle, the golf handle left, weight on your left side, swing the arms up and swing the arms down in the downswing. Up/down makes the golf ball go up.

Hitting the ball fat is caused by the club being too vertical. If you go too vertical, you'll wind up chopping the floor.

After you get all set up, make sure you're not leaning too far over on the left side. A little weight on your left side is alright, but the trick is to swing the golf club up on the inside. And that will give the golf club a little better angle into the back of the ball.

Be sure that you are looking at the ball and that you don’t rise up before you make contact. Standing up on the ball prior to the swing is the number one reason for skulling the ball.

Many beginners are eager to see where their ball is going after it is hit, but they look too soon and take their eyes off of the ball. This can also cause you to top the ball, so be sure to look at that little white ball until you hear it whooshing through the air. Then you can watch it land beautifully.

## **Chipping Problems**

When you are chipping, a common problem that many golfers face is restricting your swing while chipping, not getting enough loft, or easing into the ball. To cure this, you should shorten the stroke instead of restricting your swing and don't ease into the ball.

Make a short backstroke and use a less lofted club if you feel the need restrict your backswing. Make a long follow through to allow for the necessary acceleration. Divots are not necessary, so hit down and through so you strike the ball with a slightly descending blow. You are likely playing the ball too far forward if you do not hear a click when chipping. The ball should be positioned just before the bottom part of your stroke.

Reaching out at the ball during address and impact, a player's arms are almost at a 45-degree angle from the ground. It takes too much effort to hold your arms out at address and therefore it's even harder to get back to that position at impact.

To fix this problem, refer to the posture where the arms just hang in the natural position. If you feel like your hands are too close to the body then make the adjustment and kick out your rear end a little (check your weight distribution). The distance between your zipper and your grip should be around four knuckles.

Find a picture of a professional golfer and by using a straight edge notice how their eyes are over the shaft (approximately over the shaft label). You may have to bow more to get to that position

Another big mistake is made when referring to ball position. Some players believe they need to change the position of the ball based on what club they are using. If the ball is played too far back in the stance, your shoulders will aim right and you will start the back swing from the inside and probably come over the top at impact (slice or pull). If the ball is too far forward, your shoulder will be aiming left and you will take the club more on the outside and loop under coming down resulting in a block or a hook.

To fix this problem, the ball position should be played one ball forward of center for short to mid-irons, two balls left of center with long irons and fairway woods, three balls left of center with the driver. This may vary a little based on your swing arch.

Here's a drill to help you with this problem. Take your swing with the proper stance and posture and see where your club hits the ground. You should notice that it's very close to the left center. If you are hitting the ground way before the ball, there's a good chance you are not pivoting your hips or coming out of your stance.

So those are some of the more common mistakes made by golfers. Even if you've been golfing for years, you can still fall prey to these mistakes. Knowing how to fix them can be a great addition to your game and will eventually shave strokes off your score.

There are some shots in golf that will require some finesse in getting out of without amassing your score to new proportions. Let's look at a few trouble shots and get some advice on how to overcome them.

## **TROUBLE SHOTS**

Because golf is such a complicated – yet easy – game, you may find yourself in some situations that seem impossible to get out of. We call these trouble shots. They can be frustrating and can add to your score in record proportions. Here are some trouble shots we've encountered and ways that you can approach them.

### **Deep Rough**

Long grass has the effect of closing the face of the club and decreasing the loft of the club. For this reason, the player should use a more lofted club than if the ball were in the fairway. If a player has a long distance left, the first consideration should be getting the ball out of the rough. Use of lofted fairway woods #5, #6, #7 is advisable in this situation.

The long grass will decrease the loft of these clubs and the ball will actually go the distance of the less lofted fairway woods. Around the green, the player must again use a more lofted club. These types of shots are custom made for a wedge or a 9-iron. The effect of the long green will once again decrease the loft of the club. The ball will therefore fly lower and run more than if it were in the fairway. Remember; allow the loft of the club to lift the ball out of the rough!

### **Side hill, Downhill, and Uphill Lies**

Nothing can be more frustrating than having a golf shot on a slanted surface. The way many golf courses are laid out, you will probably have to deal with a lie like this at some point in your game. But you can deal with hilly lies with no problems and a little advice.

Take a practice swing and note where the club is striking the ground. If the club is striking the ground nearer the back foot, move the ball back in your stance; if the club is striking the ground nearer the front foot, move the ball forward in your stance. This system is the most accurate system to determine where the ball should be placed in the stance. Seldom does a player have a purely side hill or uphill lie. This system takes all the factors into account as the practice swing is the forerunner to the actual shot.

The general rule of thumb is to position the ball in the stance nearer the higher foot on the downhill lies, and about center on the uphill lies. On side hill lies, position the ball left center (as you normally would). If the ball is above your feet on the side hill lie, you will normally hit the ball straight or pull it to the left. If the ball is below your feet, most players will actually pull the ball to the left because their leg action will slow down as they try to maintain their balance.

You will want to have a longer club than you would usually use for an uphill shot (a 4 instead of a 5). Choke down on the club and put more flex in your left knee (if you are right handed). Much of your weight should be on your front leg. Remember that the ball will generally go to the left, so aim to the right of the target. Position the ball slightly ahead of center and swing in a slow deliberate way maintaining your balance.

For downhill lies, you will want a shorter club than you would normally use (a 6 instead of a 5). The ball will go right, so aim to the left of the target. Position the ball so that it is back in your stance. Put most of your weight again on the forward foot. Have some flex in your right knee and then swing slowly and deliberately maintaining your balance.

Side hill shots are probably some of the worst in golf. If you are faced with a side hill shot where the ball is below your feet, you will need a longer club than you would usually use. Set up closer to the ball when you address it and increase the flex in both of your knees. The ball will go to the right, so aim left of the target and, again, maintain your balance with a slow, deliberate backswing.

When the ball is above your feet on a side hill shot, the stance is slightly different. You will still want a longer club than usual, but you will choke down on the shaft. Stand more upright and put more weight on your toes. The ball will go left, so aim right of the target and maintain a slow and deliberate backswing as you should be doing in all hill shots.

### **Restricted Back Swing**

There are times when you will have a shot that will restrict your back swing. Let's say that your ball ends up next to a tree. You won't be able to take a normal back swing because the tree is in the way. You will have to make some modifications in order to get yourself out of this trouble shot. Luckily, it's not as difficult as you might think.

First position yourself so that you can get to the ball and still aim at your target. Practice a couple of backswings to see how far you can take the club back without bringing the tree into play. Then keep that distance first and foremost in your mind. You will need to cock your wrists and keep them cocked throughout whatever backswing you will be able to muster up.

Make a normal down swing, knowing that the club has room to miss the tree trunk and you will advance the ball into scoring position. The idea here is to just get away from the tree completely so you're not worrying about distance or even accuracy for that matter. All you want to do is get the ball back in the fairway so you can save your score.

### **Hitting Out of Water**

The main rule of thumb when you have a ball in water is to just let it be and not try to hit out of it. However, if it truly is playable in shallow water, you may want to go ahead and try to hit it out and save yourself a stroke.

The key here is to play this ball like a buried sand lie with a nine iron which will not bounce off the water like a wedge will. Use a cut shot allowing the blade to slice through the water at an oblique angle and be sure to follow through on your swing.

In other words, you will want your backswing to be more outside of the normal line and then come back in across your line with the blade of the club open. Keep your hands still in the swing as you won't want them to release and rotate. You may just find yourself back in the water if this happens.

## **Punch Shot**

A punch shot is used when you need to navigate under tree limbs and other low-lying obstacles. You will use a punch shot when you need to keep the ball low but still get some distance on your swing. A punch shot is also used to get your ball out of trouble and into the fairway. So how do you execute a good punch shot?

You can use almost any iron to execute a punch shot, but generally, a lower lofted club will work best. Begin by choking down on the shaft and place the ball further back in your stance. Seventy percent of your weight should go mostly on your left foot if you are a right handed golfer – the opposite for you lefties.

Your backswing will be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your regular backswing. Bring the club back making sure you keep your head down throughout almost the entire swing because making good contact in this situation is extremely important. Take the club back low and then finish low. What that means is that you won't have a normal follow-through as if you were hitting out of the fairway. But you do have to follow through.

The punch shot is easy to curve in one direction or another because you are generally using a lower lofted iron and they tend to exaggerate the angle of that loft. This shot is great for getting yourself out of a sticky situation involving natural hazards on the golf course.

## **The Flop Shot**

A flop shot is a high shot that travels a short distance and is used to get over objects such as trees. It is designed to sail high and clear these objects easily. If you are unable to hit a punch shot and your only option on a hole is to navigate the tree, you will want to use a flop shot. It will sail high in the air and land softly on the green with little or no forward spin.

You can also use a flop shot if you have a pin that is tucked tight – or there isn't much green in between your ball and the pin. In this situation, you will need to get the ball up in the air quickly and land softly.

For a good flop shot, you will generally use a sand wedge or a lob wedge. The ball is played more forward in your stance and you will open the club face wide and choke down on the club. The club will be taken back using your wrists more than anything.

Cock your wrists quickly in the backswing and during the down swing, you will release your wrists quickly. Your wrists will also cock in the follow-through. Essentially, this is a fast swing that requires you to abandon natural form to get the desired results.

## **Playing Into the Wind**

Another of those trouble shots is dealing with the wind. Many players advise teeing up the ball lower for a drive into the wind.

For average golfers it is better to tee the ball as normal and hit as solid a shot as you can make. The wind will exaggerate any side spin put on the ball at impact. This shot demands a solid hit with a nice even tempo.

Teeing the ball low will tend to produce a downward blow rather than a sweep through, thus producing more spin.

Another problem with the wind is club selection. If you find yourself a wedge distance from the green facing a headwind, try punching a 9 iron instead. Less loft means greater control. Stopping it will be no problem.

Our final chapter will be about a very important part of the golf game that many people just take for granted – stretching before your game.

## **STRETCHING FOR GOOD GOLF**

The importance of stretching for your golf game cannot be stressed enough. Because a [good golf swing](#) requires that your body be in a relaxed, tension-free state, you will want to release some of that tension before you ever pick up a golf club.

The good news is that these [stretching exercises](#) are easy and only take a few minutes. That means you can effectively stretch right before you start your round.

For the first exercise, take your driver and place it across your shoulders. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Wrap your arms around the club at either end. Bend slightly back stretching your back muscles. Bend side to side so that you loosen up your side muscles and shoulders. Bend forward to extend your back.

Next, perform a partial squat with your golf club in hand. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and place the club in front of you holding with both hands for balance. Lower your body by bending at the knees, not the hips, and raise the club at the same time. Raise back up and repeat ten times. During this whole stretch, you need to keep your upper body very erect.

This exercise will increase your blood flow and circulation throughout your body. This is a great total body warm up to allow your body to make a relaxed, comfortable first swing. It also increases the range of motion in your hip which encourages a more synchronized swing from the ground up.

Finally, you can do a standing rotation twist stretch. Hold a golf club chest high with the grip at shoulder width apart. While keeping your feet and hips fairly stable, rotate the club to the right and the left. Try to breathe out on every turn to release tension. Repeat each side ten times.

By doing this stretch, you will be preparing specific muscles of the trunk to make an aggressive move from the first tee on. This also prepares proper sequencing of the swing while warming muscles. This exercise will improve body movements during the swing from the beginning. This way you will not sacrifice strokes on the first couple of holes.

## CONCLUSION

We don't agree with Mark Twain that golf is a good walk wasted. It's a wonderful way to get out in the fresh air, enjoy nature, and have a little playful competition with your friends. You can get some great exercise on the golf course without straining your body which makes this sport ideal for any age group to participate in.

We do, however, agree that golf can be a very frustrating sport and one that requires a good mental state of mind as well as an attention to the body and how the golf swing works. It can be overwhelming – especially for the beginning golfer.

It is a great way to make new friends and business executives agree that the golf course is a wonderful place to make business deals and connections.

In order to make the golf game fun, you'll want to score well. With the tips we've offered you in this book, we think you'll be able to take strokes off your score when you employ the techniques we have outlined.

But nothing is quite as good for your golf game as practice. The more you play, the better you'll get. Practice on the course, practice on the driving range, practice in your backyard. Any time you can emulate swinging a club, you will start to learn about what work and what will won't when you get on the course.

Above all, don't be too hard on yourself when you get on the links. It's nearly impossible to perfect the game and you'll have your share of problems – it's almost guaranteed. That's why I think this quote can truly sum up the game of golf in the best way.

**“Golf is so popular simply because it is the  
best game in the world at which to be bad”**